

that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Enough to know. Let us hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

Love and Likeness

The Churchman.

Sympathy begets love, and love begets likeness. That is the very essence of Christian morals. To feel for and suffer with Christ results in a knowledge of Christ and a love for Christ. Men always become more or less like that which they love. The virtues which the saint laboriously cultivates, soften and dignify his countenance. Those who love Christ become like Him.

The Sunday School

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 4

BY THE EDITOR

The Death of Elisha. II Kings 13: 14-25.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.—Psalm 116: 15.

LESSON THOUGHT.—God's blessings to us are only limited by our faith.

Home Readings

Syrian oppression, II Kings 13: 1-9.
The Death of Elisha, II Kings 13: 14-25.
Death of Moses, Deut. 34.
Reward to the upright, Isa. 33: 13-17.
Christ in life or death, Phil. 1: 12-24.
Fear of death removed, II Cor. 5: 1-10.
A peaceful end, Psalm 37: 23-37.

Introductory Notes

We have now come to the close of Elisha's life on earth. In a measure it was a very quiet life, nevertheless it was an eventful life, a life full of good works, a life given to the service of God. The story of such a life as that of Elisha, living as he did in an age of evil tendencies, is an inspiration to us. It is possible to be a child of God even amid very unfavorable environments. The life of God in the human soul is stronger than, and may overcome, all our surroundings. They who trust in God will not be easily disturbed by outward circumstances, for that which is within is stronger than that which is without.

Meaning of the Text

Verse 14. Elisha it will be remembered used similar words, when the prophet Elijah was taken to heaven. The young king called him father because of the tender and loving interest the aged prophet had taken in him, which was like that of a father. To the whole nation of Israel Elisha was of more value than all its chariots and horsemen.

V. 15. What the king was directed to do here was symbolical, the meaning of which is explained in the verses which follow.

V. 16. The king's hand upon the bow, and the prophet's hand upon the king's hand was to represent the power imparted by the Lord to the bow-shot thro the prophet Elisha. He was the medium thro whom the Lord directed the affairs of Israel.

V. 17. Eastward was toward that part of

the kingdom of Israel which the Syrians had captured. It was east of Samaria, and this was a declaration of war against the troublesome invaders. Syria had given a great deal of trouble to Israel, and the military power is to be turned against them.

V. 18. He was to shoot the rest of the arrows into the ground, and this act "was in token of the number of victories he was to gain; but his stopping at the third betrayed the weakness of his faith; for as the discharged arrows signified a victory over the Syrians, it was evident that the more arrows he shot the more victories he would gain; and as he stopped so soon his conquest would be incomplete." He should have continued shooting until all the arrows were shot, or until the prophet told him to stop. It showed a lack of earnestness on the part of the king.

V. 19. The prophet tho sick, was yet enough concerned about the future welfare of the kingdom to become indignant when such small faith was exercised and such great blessings allowed to pass by without laying hold upon them. The prophet here offers victory to the king, complete victory over the king of Syria, but the opportunity was thrown away by a faithless king. The idea is that instead of three victories there would have been complete victory, and hence entire deliverance from the foreign yoke.

V. 20. This was not said of Elijah, who in the presence of Elisha was translated, taken to heaven without that strange experience we call death. In the spring of the following year, the land of Israel was invaded by the Moabites.

V. 21. This was one of the bands of the Moabites, and the bearers of this corpse being alarmed, hastily deposited the dead body in Elisha's sepulchre. This they could easily do by simply removing the stone at the mouth of the cave. It seems clear that the object of this miracle was to strengthen the king's and the people's faith in the predictions made by Elisha as to the war with the Syrians.

Vs. 22-25. In these verses the historian records the fulfilment of Elisha's prophecy as to Israel's success against the Syrians. The defeat of the enemy, the repeated recovery of the cities, and their restoration to the kingdom of Israel, were according to the prediction of Elisha the prophet.

The Lesson Applied

1. *He Died*—So it was said of the old patriarchs at the very beginning of human history, so it will continue to be said until the end of time. It does not require much time and space to write the biography of God's great servants. "And he died," is the all comprehensive expression in which God tells the story of a long and useful life. Good people die no less than the bad. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, John the Baptist, Paul, all the apostles, and Christ himself. We must not become so foolishly proud as to imagine that the world cannot get along without us. In every age God's best people have died, but his work went on without interruption.

2. *The King Weeps*.—The king came down and stood by the bedside of the dying Elisha and there declared that this one man of God was of more service to the nation than the horsemen and chariots of Israel. It is a blessed thing if we can live as Elisha did, so that when we pass away from this earth great men will come and shed tears because the world has lost something. It is sad for any one so to live that he will not be missed when he dies. It were far better to have the world weep over our departure than have vast monuments built over our graves.

3. *God's Test*.—Elisha was testing the king's willingness and fitness to receive the blessing in store for Israel. He was found wanting in that he limited the throwing of the arrows to three times. God is ever testing us, not in great things, but in the little things of life, the use we make of what we already have, by open doors of usefulness, by opportunities given. There are rich blessings in store for those who prove themselves worthy to receive. God is willing to give, but we must show that we are worthy to receive, that is that we will use aright what he gives us, and this is tested by the use we make of what we already have.

4. *Dead Yet Alive*.—God's good men after all never die. The influence of our lives does not die when we are laid in the grave. But this applies to the wicked as well as to the good. To the one it is a warning, to the other it is a comfort and encouragement. Let the wicked know that the evil they do out does not cease when they leave the world but that it continues and even multiplies as the years come and go. There is cumulative evil as well as good. The good man has the comfort to know that while his body lies in the grave and is returning to dust his works go on blessing humanity. Life is short and we may not be able to accomplish a very great deal in so short a time but we may so live that our doing good will continue for a thousand or more years.

To Make You Think

1. How did Elisha's life close? 2. Why was he thus specially favored? 3. Is such a passing out of the world more desirable than the ordinary way of death? 4. Why do many people fear death? 5. Was Elisha a good man? 6. Why did he not live longer to do good? 7. Does God give us gifts according to our fitness to receive them? 8. Does he give additional talents to those who misuse what they have? 9. Does God give more to a faithful person than to one not faithful? 10. Do we then put our own limit to the blessings we receive? 11. Why is there such poverty in spiritual things? 12. Might we enjoy greater blessings than we do? 13. In what way?

Lesson Points

1. It is blessed so to live that the world will weep over our departure.
2. God is continually testing us.
3. Blessings are given according to our faith.